

only America can lead the world's fight against it. We can't let the gun lobby turn America into a safe house for terrorists. Congress should get back on track and send me tough legislation that cracks down on terrorism. It should listen to the cries of the victims and the hopes of our children, not the back-alley whispers of the gun lobby.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 5:08 p.m. on March 15 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 16.

### **Letter to Congressional Leaders on Product Liability Legislation**

*March 16, 1996*

*Dear Mr. Leader:*

I will veto H.R. 956, the Common Sense Product Liability Legal Reform Act of 1996, if it is presented to me in its current form.

This bill represents an unwarranted intrusion on state authority, in the interest of protecting manufacturers and sellers of defective products. Tort law is traditionally the prerogative of the states, rather than of Congress. In this bill, Congress has intruded on state power—and done so in a way that peculiarly disadvantages consumers. As a rule, this bill displaces state law only when that law is more beneficial to consumers; it allows state law to remain in effect when that law is more favorable to manufacturers and sellers. In the absence of compelling reasons to do so, I cannot accept such a one-way street of federalism, in which Congress defers to state law when doing so helps manufacturers and sellers, but not when doing so aids consumers.

I also have particular objections to certain provisions of the bill, which would encourage wrongful conduct and prevent injured persons from recovering the full measure of their damages. Specifically, the bill's elimination of joint-and-several liability for non-economic damages, such as pain and suffering, will mean that victims of terrible harm sometimes will not be fully compensated for it. Where under current law a joint wrongdoer will make the victim whole, under this bill an innocent victim would suffer when one wrongdoer goes bankrupt and cannot pay his portion of the judgment. It is impor-

tant to note that companies sued for manufacturing and selling defective products stand a much higher than usual chance of going bankrupt; consider, for example, manufacturers of asbestos or breast implants or intra-uterine devices.

In addition, for those irresponsible companies willing to put profits above all else, the bill's capping of punitive damages increases the incentive to engage in the egregious misconduct of knowingly manufacturing and selling defective products. The provision of the bill allowing judges to exceed the cap in certain circumstances does not cure this problem, given Congress's clear intent, expressed in the Statement of Managers, that judges should do so only in the rarest of circumstances.

The attached Statement of Administration Policy more fully explains my position on this issue—an issue of great importance to American consumers, and to evenly applied principles of federalism.

Sincerely,

**Bill Clinton**

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Bob Dole, Senate majority leader, Thomas Daschle, Senate minority leader, Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard Gephardt, House minority leader. A statement of administration policy on H.R. 956 was attached to the letter. The letter was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary but was not issued as a White House press release.

### **Remarks to the United Jewish Appeal Young Leadership Conference**

*March 17, 1996*

You know, I've been trying to convince everyone else in Washington to delay the onset of this year's campaign, and you aren't helping very much. [*Laughter*] But you have my permission to vary from the official line. [*Laughter*]

I thank you so much. I want to thank my friend David Hermelin for his wonderful remarks and his remarkable service. I don't know that I've ever known anybody that had such a remarkable combination of energy and commitment to the common good. He is indefatigable, and all of his energies seem

to me to be directed toward good causes, including my own. [Laughter] And I thank him for that.

To Ambassador Yaacobi, Mrs. Rabinovich, Efrat, members of the Young Leadership cabinet, and all of you, thank you for giving me the opportunity to come by tonight. And let me begin by saying that a lot of people speak about trying to advance the cause of humanity, but you actually do something about it. So I want to begin simply by thanking you for everything you do, from the hot meals for the homebound to wheelchairs for the disabled to shelter for refugees to comfort for victims of Alzheimer's and AIDS. And thank you, of course, for your many services to the cause of Israel.

You know, I was trying to think of something I could say tonight, just one line that would capture our country's rich diversity and the common commitment we should all feel to the cause of peace and standing up against terrorism everywhere in the world. And it seems to me the best line I could give all of you at this great Jewish event tonight is "Happy St. Patrick's Day." [Laughter]

Let me say that the 2 days and 9 hours I spent going from here to Sharm al-Sheikh to Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and back to Tel Aviv again and then home were a remarkable experience for me. I am grateful that the United States is a friend of Israel and a friend of the cause of peace. I am grateful that the United States is an implacable opponent of terrorism. And I am grateful that at this moment I was able to go on behalf of all the American people to stand with the people of Israel in their time of pain and sorrow and challenge to express the outrage of our people at the latest campaign of terror and to show our solidarity.

All of you know this, but it bears repeating that the terrorist attacks claimed not only Israeli lives but also those of Palestinians—and some of the most gripping tales I heard when I was there came from their family members, who also long for peace—and two young Americans, Sarah Duker and Matthew Eisenfeld.

Now it is important, quite apart from the peace process, that we once again say to the world: We know no country is safe from ter-

ror. We have seen it in the World Trade Center and in Oklahoma City in the United States. We know our friends in Japan have suffered it in the terrible attack of sarin gas in the Tokyo subway. But we know that in the Middle East it has too often been employed as an instrument of politics. And it is wrong. We stand against it now. We redouble our efforts against it, and we will be against it forever.

The symbol of our solidarity on this trip was perhaps best conveyed by the stone from the South Lawn of the White House that I was privileged to place on the grave of my friend Prime Minister Rabin, along with all of his family members. That is the place where the first accord with the Palestinians was signed. It represents our hope for progress, our belief in the chances of peace, and our unwavering solidarity.

As you know, we have resolved to strengthen our cooperation with all those who will stand against terror in the Middle East. We are committing more than \$100 million to the task. We are increasing our intelligence sharings, and we are developing new methods to combat violence there. We are convinced that ultimately fear will overcome the adversity of terror, because overcoming that kind of adversity is the genius of the Jewish people and the history of the state of Israel.

No nation on Earth has experienced more often the painful truth that the path of triumph often passes through tragedy. No people knows better that we must deny victory to oppressors. The Jewish people have overcome every one of their would-be destroyers, denying them their goal and in so doing reaffirming that what is good in human nature can prevail.

It may be that until the end of time there will always be some group that will seek to do harm to others for their own advantage. We cannot rid the world of evil. It may be that until the end of time there will always be some group that will seek to distort the meaning of a religion, to demonize those who are different from them. But it should be heartening to you to know that today more nations than ever have risen up with Israel to oppose the destroyers of the present day, to oppose those who would kill and maim

and who seek to destroy the peace through violence.

That really was the message of the meeting at Sharm al-Sheikh, that Israel is no longer alone. The Summit of Peacemakers was the largest and highest level meeting of its kind ever held. At the urging of Israel's neighbors, 29 nations, including 13 from Arab states, came to demonstrate their support for peace and their opposition to terrorism.

I believe that that summit marked the beginning of a truly unified regional effort to root out those responsible for the bloodshed. It produced concrete results. And soon there will be a follow-up conference here in Washington within the month, at which representatives of all the nations will be present. And we will press ahead to implement the commitments that all made at Sharm al-Sheikh.

Just think about it. A meeting like this would have been unthinkable just a few years ago. But for the first time, Arab nations in the region are beginning to realize that pain in Israel is a danger to them as well. Large majorities of Palestinians and Jordanians and Egyptians know that the destruction of innocent life in Israel is a threat to the peaceful future they have declared as their goal for themselves and their own children.

They understood that security must not lie only at the end of the road for peace. There must be security every step of the way or there can be no peace. No one seriously believes anymore it is fair to ask Israel to give up its security until the peace is made. That is wrong, and we will not support it.

When I read the story of the Palestinian nurse who was killed in the bombing and what her son said about her loss, it convinced me that what I see in Bosnia and what I see in Northern Ireland is also true now in Israel and in the Middle East. And it is a great cause for hope and a sobering reminder of the dimension of our challenge, and that is that the great division today in the Middle East is not between those of different religions or ethnic groups just as it is no longer between Croatian, Serb, and Muslim in Bosnia or between Catholic and Protestant in Northern Ireland.

It really is between those who are reaching for a better tomorrow and those who have retreated into the pointless, bloody hostility

of yesterday; those who are willing to open their arms to their neighbors and those who want to remain with their fist clenched; those who are willing to raise their children based on what kind of people they are inside and what they stand for and what their character is and those who wish to continue to raise their children based on who they are not and whom they can hate.

That is the clear decision that all peoples of the world confronted with these kind of conflicts have to make. And even though this is a time of mourning it is also a time of hope, for the rest of the world is coming to know what America has long understood: Israel must be strong and secure and confident if we want peace and justice for every person in the Middle East. And I assure you we will continue to support those who take risks for peace in the Middle East, in Bosnia, and around the world.

The fight against terrorism must be a national security priority for the American people. Last year when I announced the stronger steps we in the United States were prepared to take alone against Iran because of their policies, many of my colleagues around the world declined to join in. Some of them, my friends and freedom-loving people, openly said I was wrong. I didn't hear that so much in Sharm al-Sheikh. People are beginning to see the truth. You cannot, you must not, countenance people who believe it is legitimate to fund and arm others to kill innocent civilians, no matter where they are.

Let me remind my fellow Americans that we have challenges here at home and that if we want to truly be effective in the transnational fight against terrorism, we must have the tools to deal with terrorism here at home. Well over a year ago I sent to Congress a bill to improve our ability to investigate, to prosecute, to punish terrorist activity. After our own tragedy in Oklahoma City I made that legislation even stronger and challenged the Congress to pass it.

Last June the Senate passed the counterterrorism legislation. Until last week, the House of Representatives, letting more than a half-year go by, had not acted. Then last week when it did act, unbelievably it acted to destroy the bill, to gut it, indeed to mock it. The House voted, for example,

to delete a provision of the bill that would allow us to tag explosive materials so that if a bomb is exploded somewhere in America it will be marked and we can trace it back to its source. Now, if you have your car stolen in Washington, DC, tonight and somebody drives it to West Virginia, I hope it doesn't happen—[laughter]—but think about it, and you call the police and you tell them your name and the serial—and the license plate of your car and the car has any serial numbers on it, and it's found tomorrow morning in a parking lot of a grocery store in West Virginia, under the national computer network system we have, within 30 seconds it can be identified as your car. And you can be told that it's your car.

We have serial numbers on guns that are sold in America unless they're filed off. Now why in the world the Washington gun lobby is opposed to our tagging explosives which could be used to blow apart the bodies of innocent civilians is beyond me. If people want to use the explosives for appropriate construction work, they can still do it. Their civil liberties are not going to be impaired. But as soon as the objection was raised, the House says, thank you very much, we'll take it right out.

We had a provision in that bill that would allow us to deport more quickly people who come into this country and are obviously involved in raising funds for terrorist organizations. They took that out. We had other provisions that would enable us to move more aggressively against organizations that clearly engage in terrorism. They took those out.

And they imposed a commission not to study terrorism within our borders or beyond our borders but to study the Federal law enforcement officials whose primary job it is to combat this kind of terrorist activities. That is the wrong response, and it sends a terrible signal to people throughout the world who believe that if they can just get the right kind of extremist opposition to standing up to terrorism in America it will weaken our resolve. They are wrong about that, and we should pass a good antiterrorism bill immediately.

I just want to say, if I might, one more word about why you're here in this leadership conference and to say I admire this orga-

nization for many things, but not the least of it is always trying to develop a new generation of leaders.

I sought this office more than 4 years ago because I believe that our country had to change direction if we were going to achieve the objectives that I feel are important for America. One is to guarantee the American dream for every person who is willing to work for it. Second, to maintain America's leadership in the cause of peace and freedom and security and prosperity throughout the world, we cannot withdraw; we must continue to lead. And third is to continue to build the American community, to forge a new unity amidst all of our diversity based on shared values and genuine honest respect for diversity. Now, if we can do those three things, this country is going to be just fine and the world will be a better place.

As I have said many times, in order to achieve those objectives, we have to grow the economy in a way that gives everybody a chance to participate, we have to squarely face our shared social challenges, from a high crime rate to abject poverty rates among our young people to teen pregnancy rates and other problems that make childhood more difficult. We have to work hard to overcome the impulses that so many Americans understandably feel to withdraw from the world at the end of the cold war, and to try to chart a new course. And we have to continue to try to inspire more faith and trust in the American people in their Government.

Now in each of those areas we're better off than we were, but we have significant challenges ahead. We should be grateful that we have 8.4 million more jobs than we did in 1992, because a lot of our other competitors have no new jobs. And we should be glad that every year for the last 3 years we set a record in the number of new businesses. We should be glad that businesses owned by women alone have hired more people than the Fortune 500 have laid off. We should be glad about that.

But that should not make us insensitive to the fact that there are pockets in the inner cities and isolated rural areas of America that have felt no economic recovery. It should not make us insensitive to the fact that the educational divide in the new economy into

which we're moving has become so great that about half the hourly wage earners in America in the bottom half are earning about the same wages as their counterparts were 20 years ago, once you adjust for inflation.

We should be sensitive to the fact that even though we're creating far more high-tech jobs than we're losing, if you happen to be one of those 50-year-old people who gets downsized about the time you're trying to send your kids to college, there needs to be an answer for you as well. So we're better off than we were, but we have to build on our successes and face our challenges.

If you look at the fabric of American society, we should be grateful for the fact that as compared with 4 years ago, the crime rate is down, the welfare rolls are down, the poverty rolls are down, and the teen pregnancy rate is dropping. But we should also say, compared to any appropriate standard for a civilized, disciplined, orderly hope for society, all these problems are still far too great. And we must keep going until we have literally wiped them from our concerns.

We can be grateful for the progress that's been made in political reform. The rules on lobbying, for example, are much more open and much stricter than they were when I became President. Now Congress has to apply to itself the laws it imposes on the private sector. Those are good things; we can be glad about that.

But we also know that there are other things that have to be done, not the least of which is a legitimate, genuine campaign finance reform bill that gives every citizen the opportunity to run for office and all citizens the same influence in the electoral process. Until that is done we will not have finished our work.

And while the world is clearly a safer place not only for Americans but for virtually all other people than it was 4 years ago, we know that we have to keep going. We have to keep going not only in the Middle East and in Northern Ireland and in Bosnia; we have to keep going until children everywhere no longer fear that their legs will be blown off by landmines when they're walking in fields. We have to keep going until we know that we have done everything that can be humanly done to remove from people every-

where the threat of biological or chemical or small-scale nuclear weapons. We have to keep going until we have concluded all possible agreements to ban nuclear testing, so that that will be the beginning of the end of any nuclear threat for the people of the world.

And we have to remember that nations are like children; you can't just say that they should say no to bad things, you have to give them some good things to say yes to. And therefore, it is right and decent and in our self-interest to keep expanding the frontiers of economic opportunity and not to forget that all those people in Latin America that still worry about whether their children will even grow to be adults deserve to be part of a new economy and if we do it right they'll be our best customers; that all those people in Africa we long to see free of the kind of carnage we see in Rwanda and Burundi deserve to have some hope for a better future if they work hard and do the right thing; that the people who live in India and Pakistan that we long to see walk away from their old, bitter conflicts have to also be able to walk toward a future of brighter hope; and that for America to do well we have to continue to be committed to creating that kind of future. It's in our people's interest to do what is right in the world.

And so that brings me to you. For except for those of us who are, in effect, hired by you to tend for a little while to the public interest, all other Americans necessarily have to be preoccupied with their own interests, with the work they must do and the children they're trying to raise and the things within their immediate reach. But we must, we must, reassert in this country a commitment to citizen leadership among the younger generation of Americans.

You know, when I was in Israel I spoke in Tel Aviv to a large number of young people. And afterward the Prime Minister asked me if I would take questions. And I was fairly apprehensive, but I said okay. [Laughter] And a young person said, "Well, what advice would you give to someone my age who wanted to be involved in a position of leadership and responsibility? What would you tell me if I wanted to go into public life, what should I do?"

And I said, "Well, in my country when young people ask me that question I tell them to do three things: One, to get the best education you can, so that you'll be able to learn for a lifetime, because the world is growing more complex, there is more to know, there is more to understand, and more importantly, there are more connections to be made. You can't just isolate one body of knowledge or one experience from another."

The second thing you have to do is to develop a genuine interest in people. You know, I hear a lot of people in my line of work talking, and it's hard to imagine from the anger in their voices that they like people very much. You don't have to give up on your own heritage to try to stand in another person's shoes.

In one county in America alone there are over 150 different racial and ethnic groups. And that is a great gift for our country in a global society. It is a gift, one we should cherish and treasure and nourish. But unless we realize that curious blend of human reality that gives something common to human nature across all the racial and ethnic divides and still demands of us to respect each other's honestly held differences, we will not meet the challenges of the future. And our inability to do that and our tendency here in America to use elections as an excuse to divide one another, so that we choose up sides based on the belief that our opponents are aliens—and we learn that they're aliens from 30-second ads that tell us how evil and bad they are—that is a very dangerous tendency in a global society when we need to be pulling together and when we can only solve our problems by pulling together. There is no other way to solve the people problems that human societies everywhere face and that the United States has in abundance except by working together, by reaching across the divides.

And the third thing I tell young people is that they should figure out what they believe, stand up for it, and work for it and not be deterred.

To be perfectly honest, the thing I like best about your cheering tonight is that you were cheering for me. *[Laughter]* The thing I like second best about it was your energy, your belief, your conviction, your passion.

You know, I see all these surveys that say Americans are cynical. My friends, that's a great luxury. If you worried about whether every bus you boarded was loaded with a bomb, you wouldn't have the time to be cynical. If you lived in a tiny village in the Andes where you didn't know where your child's next meal was coming from, you wouldn't have the time to be cynical. If you lived in a country in Africa where you were trying to save your wife's life because she belonged to a different tribe than you do and your tribe had the army and they were going through one little village after another with machetes, you wouldn't have the option of being cynical.

You live in a country with the strongest economy, the greatest potential, the widest diversity, the largest amount of opportunities on Earth. And you are not cynical or you wouldn't be here at this conference and you wouldn't have stood up and you wouldn't have exhibited all that energy. But a lot of the people that you work and live with back in your communities are. And they say, aw, it doesn't matter who wins, all the politicians—you've heard all that stuff. I'm telling you it's a bunch of bull. *[Laughter]* It's a bunch of bull, it's not true.

You know, before we had to stop them for the election season of the other party—*[laughter]*—they have to hold their elections; I'm not complaining. But before we had to stop them for the election season of the other party, the Vice President and I spent over 50 hours with the leaders of the Republicans and Democrats in Congress. And we spent the time in private. And most of what we said I don't think I should talk about in any great detail; it wasn't all that different from what you've already heard in public. But after you spend 50 hours with other people and you talk through and you express your reality—what you think and what you feel, you develop a certain relationship to people even if they're very different from you.

And the point I want to make to you is that the leaders of the majority in Congress and I really do view the world in different ways. But that is not a cynical statement. And it has nothing to do with campaign tactics, about which I spoke earlier. It is a plain fact. And that's why I say to young people, you

have to decide what you believe and take sides and stand up. But there's nothing to be cynical about. These differences are real and deep and profound and they matter. And they're honestly held by all the parties.

And I just want to say to you that this is a very great country, but if you want your country—when those of you who are younger are my age, and I'm nearly eligible to join AARP—[laughter]—I hate it, but it's true—[laughter]—if you want this country when you're 50, when you're 60, when you're 65 to be the beacon of hope for the world, to be Israel's best friend, to stand up for freedom and against terrorism, if that's what you want, if you want every child who grows up in this country to believe that he or she can live out their dreams if they'll work for it, then cynicism and inaction and passivity have no place in your future or the future of your friends and neighbors back home where you live. You have to lead. And that's what I want you to do.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:12 p.m. in the ballroom of the Washington Hilton and Towers Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to David Hermelin, national vice chair, United Jewish Appeal; Gad Yaacobi, Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations; Efrat Rabinovich, wife of Itamar Rabinovich, Israeli Ambassador to the United States; and Prime Minister Shimon Peres of Israel. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

**Remarks on the Opening of the  
Los Angeles Branch of the  
Museum of Television and Radio**  
*March 17, 1996*

Let me say that I'm very sorry I couldn't be with you in person tonight. But I am delighted to be here by satellite to open the Los Angeles branch of the Museum of Television and Radio. Hillary and I send our best wishes to all of you, and we know we have an awful lot of friends among you tonight.

I'm speaking to you from the White House historic library which actually has something in common with the museum. Even though many of the books that fill this room were written long before we ever heard a voice over the radio or saw a face on the screen,

all three mediums serve much the same purpose; they enable us to communicate, to pass along ideas, stories, histories, reports from one person to another, to get a feel for the times. And that's why your museum is so important, for radio and television are truly witnesses to our century.

Among the 75,000 programs available are President Franklin Roosevelt's "fireside chats," which helped to pull our Nation through the Depression and the Second World War. There's footage of the triumph of man's first steps on the moon, a record of our civil rights struggles. And having just returned from the Middle East, I am especially sensitive to the fact that you have footage of President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin and later of the historic handshake between Chairman Arafat and Prime Minister Rabin. You also have footage of the tragedy of President Kennedy's assassination. But I'm also told there are even a few lighter moments reserved for "I Love Lucy" and "Happy Days" and "Seinfeld."

This museum is a tribute not only to radio and television but especially to the men and women who pioneered them and who made the most of their infinite potential. Some of our country's greatest creative talents have dedicated their lives to writing, directing, and producing radio and TV shows. And some of our greatest talents are still engaged in that important work. This museum honors them too.

The Museum of Television and Radio is doing nothing less than preserving our historical and cultural legacy for the future. Through its screening and listening devices, the seminars, the classes, the museum plays an important role as it enhances people's understanding of the craft and the creativity of these two media and how they've had an impact on our lives. Using the same satellite technology that allows me to join you this evening, the museum is able to take its education programs to a national audience, particularly through its University Satellite Seminar Series, which reaches college students all across our Nation.

I know many of you in attendance have been instrumental in giving us the gift of radio and television. Let me thank you for that gift which touches millions of Americans